



Ninety – Sixth Legislature – First Session – 1999
Introducer's Statement of Intent
LB 869

Chairperson: Senator Curt Bromm

Committee: Transportation

Date of Hearing: 03/15/99

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 869 would adopt the Nebraska Telecommuting Act, which would grant state agencies the authority to implement a telecommuting program allowing eligible employees to work away from their traditional places of work by using computers and telecommunications equipment, either from a satellite telecommuting site or from home. If this legislation is enacted, Nebraska could join a growing list of states with telecommuting acts which have enjoyed improvements in program efficiency and employee satisfaction. Telecommuting has become very common in the private sector and is successfully used by companies such as AT&T, IBM, Travelers Insurance, Sears, and American Express, as well as many mid-sized and smaller companies.

As a primary benefit, a telecommuting program could help address the labor shortage problem that has been predicted to occur in Nebraska within the next six years. The dean of the University of Nebraska College of Business Administration has projected that by the year 2006, the job growth rate will reach 14 percent, but the labor market growth rate will reach only around 11 percent. Even now, the low unemployment rate in the Lincoln area is resulting in a shortage of workers for some positions, and retention issues for other positions. By enacting a telecommuting program, the state could increase its ability to attract and retain highly qualified workers, including parents with young children, and people with disabilities.

This bill was drafted by compiling the language of the state statutes and policies of Florida, Utah, Minnesota, California, Oregon, Arizona and Missouri. All of these states have had well-documented success with their telecommuting programs. For example, in Florida, program survey results, conducted on both supervisors and employees, showed significant increases in productivity and quality of work and decreases in employee commute time. Arizona's telecommuting law has helped to alleviate problems with traffic congestion, air pollution and energy consumption, and a reduction of frequency of illnesses and absences from work.

These same results could benefit Nebraska through the enactment of this bill. Through telecommuting, there can be improvements in program efficiency, employee satisfaction and morale, and employee retention. Decreased costs can occur for office rental space, gasoline and automobile maintenance, and parking.

Under the general administration of the Department of Administrative Services, this act would allow state agencies to determine, based upon their own needs, what positions and employees could benefit most from a telecommuting arrangement. Once the agency determines that an employee is eligible, and if that employee voluntarily agrees, the act would allow the agency and employee to enter into an agreement where the employee's duties could be performed from an alternate work site or from home.

Principal Introducer:

Senator Curt Bromm